

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## The Ministry and Power of the Holy Spirit

*"But the helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, shall teach you all things, and remind you of all things which I said to you." - John 14:26, Diaglott.*

THIS prophetic promise of Jesus had its initial fulfillment at Pentecost, and was spoken to the Apostles on the night that he instituted the memorial of his coming death. Manifestly, the words have a direct application to the Apostles, as they were the ones who needed to be reminded of the things Jesus had said to them, not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of all for whom they would record them.

Jesus had been their constant companion and teacher for three and a half years. They had learned to rely upon him for guidance in all the affairs of their lives; they felt their utter dependence upon him; and so the news that he was about to leave them and go where they could not follow, had filled them with sorrow and apprehension. Jesus had more than once told them of his' coming sacrifice and death, but their preconceived ideas had apparently made it impossible for them to comprehend. They were looking for a Messiah that would exalt their nation above the nations of earth and would bring the blessings promised by the Prophets, so they were not prepared to believe him. Peter wanted to know why he could not go where his Lord was going. "I will lay *down* my life on your behalf," he said; but as Jesus foretold, the night did not pass before Peter had denied him with cursing.

Unmindful of his own approaching trial and suffering, Jesus, in his realization of the sorrow and need of the Apostles, spent most of the remaining time at his disposal, in ministering to them the assurance that divine power and wisdom would take care of them; that a helper would be with them continually to give them aid and guidance. As our text says, this helper would be the holy spirit which the Father would send in his name or stead; and it would not only constitute their teacher, guiding them in the matter of truth, but would also recall to their minds all the things he had previously said to them.

## JESUS OPERATING THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Greek word that is translated as "helper" in our text, is used only by John. The four times it occurs in his Gospel, it applies to the holy spirit, and is rendered by the various translators as *comforter*, *helper*, and *advocate*. This is also the word that is translated as advocate in First John, chapter two, verse one, where we are told that "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore, the holy spirit which dwells in the mind, and heart of each one whose consecration has been accepted of the Father, operates for them in our, Lord's name or stead, since it was in his name that we received the spirit.

In the Apostle Paul's writings we have a verification of this fact. He does not use the same word that John uses, but a word of similar meaning by which he shows that both our Lord and the holy spirit intercede for us. In Romans 8:26, 27 he says: "In like manner also the spirit assists our weaknesses; for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought; but; the spirit itself intercedes with unspoken groans. And he who searches. the hearts, knows what is the mind of the spirit, because according to God it intercedes on behalf of saints." (*Diagott.*) On the other hand, in verse thirty-four we read: "Who is he that: condemn eth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also h maketh *intercession* for us. This is the same word used in connection with the operation of the holy spirit, and so we can see that it operates in full accord with the work of Christ on behalf of saints.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

But what is the holy spirit? And how is it manifested? To other than Bible Students it would be necessary to answer these questions; for the men who translated our King James version of the Bible, believed it to be a person, equal in every respect to the Father and the Son, Therefore, whenever possible, they gave it the name *Ghost*, and designated it by personal pronouns. Brother Russell's exposition of the matter in Volume Five of the Scripture Studies, very fully and definitely shows the fallacy of this view, and he points out, that in those texts where it has been possible to construe it as being a person, it is solely because it reflects the mind, will, power, and influence of the one from whom it emanates. It is holy therefore, because God is holy, and because it is the exercise of his mind, will, power, and influence, in and for those who are being fitted for the heavenly inheritance.

The literal meaning of the Hebrew "ruach" and the Greek "pneuma" which are often rendered by the word "spirit," is wind or current of air, and we find them translated by the word "wind" more than one hundred times in our King James version. For example, Psalm 1:4 reads: "The chaff which the wind driveth away." The fitness of this translation is readily seen because of the manner in which they at that time threshed their grain. Then again in John 3:8 we read: "The wind bloweth where it listeth." In the context of this latter citation, our Lord gives us an indication of the basic thought underlying the word wherever it occurs; for he says, "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or ' whither it goeth." In other words, it is an invisible power or influence and is properly applied to God's mind or power or influence which are invisible.

The theory that only the literal meanings of Hebrew or Greek words are necessary or proper in their translation; is certainly disproven by the variety of ways these two words must be translated to convey the meanings of the texts in which they are found. For example, it would not make very good sense to change the word "mind" to wind or to spirit in Proverbs 29:11, where we read, "A fool uttereth all his mind."

## MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

When the spirit of God "moved" or "brooded upon the face of the waters," it was his power that caused them to bring forth in harmony with his will; and when his holy spirit is received into our lives, it is his influence and power that causes the change that takes place within us. The holy spirit has been manifested in many, many ways; and when we search the Word in an attempt to list these, we very soon come to a realization that there is no intelligence or power that has not come from God; not from the Son, nor from the holy spirit, but from God. Therefore, when our Lord Jesus, in his prehuman existence, exercised authority and power in the creation of all things that were made, it was because the wisdom and power to do this 'was communicated to him by God through the holy spirit. Jesus testified, "I can of mine own self do nothing." (John 5:30.) "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." - John 12:49, 50.

Since, as we are told, all things came into being through the Logos, and apart from him nothing has been created (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6), therefore it was the spirit of God exercised through him that "brooded upon the face of the waters." The skill and intelligence of the workmen that wrought all the various parts and paraphernalia for the tabernacle service, were but the manifestation of God's spirit operating through them, for we read: "Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise hearted man in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all :manner of work ifor the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded." - Exod. 36:1.

The holy spirit's operation therefore is manifested in the "brooding upon the face of the waters"; the imparting of skill and cunning to craftsmen in fashioning and furnishing the tabernacle; the giving of understanding and ability, to Moses and the Elders of Israel to establish and operate a form of government that has been a criterion for all attempts at righteous government since that day. To the judges and leaders of Israel the holy spirit gave power and wisdom to keep that nation separate from the idolatrous nations all about them. To Joseph and Daniel it gave ability to interpret dreams; and all the true prophets of God were inspired by it to foretell coming events and the out-working of God's plan. But in this case, it was more or less a mechanical operation, for they themselves were not given to understand the things they prophesied. With the coming of our Lord, however, there was a change of operation: Jesus received the spirit without measure. (John 3:34.) This was at the time he symbolized his consecration by water immersion, for John testified saying, "I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on him. And I knew him not [as the Son of God, the Messiah]: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the holy spirit. And I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God." - John 1:32-34.

Jesus, therefore, is the one through whom we receive the baptism of the holy spirit; for just as in the tabernacle picture, the holy anointing oil was all poured upon the head of Aaron by Moses, whence it flowed down to his body members; so, in antitype, God anointed Jesus with the fulness of his own mind, will, power, influence, and Jesus in turn has imparted this holy spirit to his body members in proportion to their capacity and ability to use it.

The amount of the spirit that we individually receive, seems to be in direct proportion to the depth and faithfulness of our consecration. Not that anything less than our all is ever accepted of the

Father, but that we differ in what constitutes that all, and in the manner and degree in which we are able to present that all in service.

### **VESSELS IN THE LORD'S SERVICE**

We recall a very forceful illustration of this that was given at a Brooklyn Convention in 1944 by our Brother Sonntag. In effect he said: Just imagine you are viewing a large table on which there is placed a variety of vessels dedicated to the purpose of ministering a very pure, life-giving water. In the center is a tall, gracefully formed vase, beautiful in outline and contour; it indicates refinements, lovely traits and manners, so to speak. Here beside it is another vase, almost as tall but not so well formed: its appearance is not so graceful, and it will not pour as smoothly and easily. Then over on this corner of the table stands a jug. Its capacity is large but it is amore difficult to pour from, as the water is apt to come in blurbs or gurgles. Then here beside the jug is a large pail. Any one attempting to drink from a vessel of this shape is apt to get wet outside as well as inside. There are also a variety of pitchers -- very serviceable vessels -- and bottles, bowls, flasks, beakers, mugs, goblets, glasses, cups, and saucers.

What a conglomeration! But if each and all have been emptied of whatever they may have contained before they were placed on the table, they can all be used to minister the good water to the thirsty. The water will of course conform to the contour of the vessel into which it is poured: but this does not change the water, nor diminish its value to the thirsty, for the water does not obtain its value from the vessel, but from the fountain from which it came. It is evident, too, that some of these vessels have far more capacity than do others, and can therefore be used in a much larger way. The little flat saucer does, not hold much and may often need refilling, but in its very open simplicity it may be just the vessel most suited to minister to some poor, thirsty creature.

Likewise, there is just as great a variety in the human vessels that are filled with the holy spirit, and they differ just as greatly in their capacity and in their outward form and ability to manifest that spirit. The spirit that fills the saucer-like individual is just the same as that which fills the Apostle Paul or John or Peter or whoever it may be; the one is sanctified just as fully as is the other, for the individual does not sanctify the spirit, the spirit sanctifies the individual, and is given as fully as the capacity of the individual will permit.

And so while the illustration is apt in the sense that the Lord accepts us as we are when he cleanses and sanctifies us by his spirit, yet, unless we could think of some magic quality in the water that would gradually change the contour of all those vessels so they would eventually conform to the shape and beauty of the tall vase in the center, it comes short; for the object and work of the holy spirit in us is to transform us into the image of Christ. "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." - Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18.

### **GOD'S WORKMANSHIP THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Do we comprehend the magnitude of this work of the spirit? Do we give it free course in our lives through earnest, whole-hearted submission and prayerful, cooperation? Or do we incline to indifference and slackness in our consecration, permitting the fleshly mind and body to exercise the natural tendencies of self-indulgence, impatience, fault finding, evil surmising, and the many other traits that hinder and strangle the influence of the holy spirit within. When we permit the natural tendencies to take their course, then "we walk after the flesh" - we help to fix and establish ungodly traits; and if we continue in this way, there will come a time when we cannot be changed, when we will lose all desire for change and so shrink from the effort necessary to godliness. Such become "carnally minded," which we are warned will mean death. - Rom. 8:6.

Every time we acquiesce in the evil tendencies of our fallen nature, we "grieve the holy spirit of God, whereby we have been sealed unto the day of deliverance." (Eph. 4:30.) Rather, says Paul, "Let *all* bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving, one another *even as God for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you." - Eph. 4:31, 32.

In doing this we "walk after the spirit." We show that we have become the children of God, that the begetting received of him has resulted in our quickening: for it is the spirit that quickens, that causes us to be patient when we would naturally be impatient, to be forgiving when feelings of bitterness are striving for mastery over our minds; to be gentle in our speech and attitude when the fleshly spirit is clamoring to have its way. If we give way to the natural tendencies with no thought or endeavor at restraint, it indicates that either we never possessed, the Lord's spirit, or else we have quenched that spirit to a degree where it no longer operates. This in one who had been a partaker of God's spirit. would mean annihilation. - Heb. 6:4-6.

"If we [the Church, spirit-begotten ones] live after the flesh, we shall die: but if through the spirit we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. - Rom. 8:13.

The holy spirit does not coerce our wills; it counsels adherence to God's commands. We have been left free to follow the dictates of our own wills, for the only worship and service accept, able unto the heavenly Father is that which emanates from the heart as a free-will offering. "God is a spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24.) So then, if we give heed to the voice of the spirit beseeching us to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1), and in doing this become tender hearted, kind and sympathetic, meek and forgiving, not requiting evil with evil nor abuse with abuse, but exercising love toward all, having special consideration for our brethren, since they are the special targets for Satan's venom, then if faithful to the end we can expect to be declared "overcomers."

The ministry and power of the holy spirit in us is then, first of all a work of enlightenment and grace: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8.) And when we have responded to this enlightenment of the spirit, and have yielded ourselves in full consecration to the doing of God's will, the spirit then becomes the seed of begettall, the start of a new life, the planting of a hope that branches out into heavenly aspirations for spirit-life in union with our Lord.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us ["again" not in the original text] unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." - I Pet. 1:3-5.

Then following begettall; the spirit becomes the quickening power; it begins the process of our transformation, the changing of our thoughts and impulses from following the unholy, natural tendencies to the cultivation of the fruit of the spirit. The spirit is also the power that causes the fruit to grow; but we have to cooperate by the cultivation of the soil, so to speak; we must keep our hearts free from love of the weeds of self-ease and unholy desires of the flesh, *and* must nurture the spirit's planting. We must "give all diligence in adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. For *if these things be in you and abound*, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, he cannot see afar off, and hash

forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the father brethren, *give diligence* to make your calling and election sure: for *if* ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2. Pet. 1:5-11.)

"Breathe on us, Lord; Thy radiance pour  
On all the wonders of the page  
Where hidden lies the heavenly lore  
That blessed our youth and guides our *age*."

"Give strength, blest Savior, in Thy might;  
Illuminate our hearts, and we,  
Transformed into Thine image bright,  
Shall teach, and love, and live, like Thee!"

- John T. Read.

## **"Rejoice in the Lord"**

*"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."* - Philippians 4:4.

THESE words of joy and triumph are not from one who is free to go and come as he pleases, nor to serve the Lord without let or hindrance, as the holy spirit would indicate; no, these are words from one whose activities are circumscribed by prison walls and by the will or whim of the Roman soldier to whom he was chained. This is an admonition to the Lord's people at Philippi, from a prisoner of the Lord at Rome, about the year 64 A.D., from the pen of the great Apostle Paul.

The theme of the epistle is Christian experience, genuine and deep, an experience so real and satisfying that it could find expression in a shout of victory, a paean of joy under the most adverse circumstances. "The letter suggests that Christian experience is not just something that is going on around the believer but something which is going on within him." Thus it was with the great Apostle to the Gentiles, whose experience in the Christian way we find epitomized in his own words: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

### **THE REASON FOR THE LETTER**

The aged Apostle (not so much in years as in experience and suffering for Christ) has just received a message from his loved ones at Philippi, at the hands of his beloved Epaphroditus, who came bearing not only good tidings but also a substantial gift from that ecclesia, a token of love, for the temporal needs of their beloved pastor, and in response to this loving gesture Paul dictates the message which we know as the Epistle to the Philippians.

As the aged missionary applied himself to this task, fond memories are awakened as he recalls the events and experiences that attended his first visit to Philippi, which had come about in direct compliance with the Lord's will, revealed to him in the night vision. The words, "Come over into Macedonia and help us," found a quick response in this zealous servant of the Lord; his own plans were immediately set aside, and: thus the Gospel instead of going deeper into the provinces of Asia Minor was divinely directed westward to the shores of Greece. Here a decision was made that has profoundly altered the course of human history, for the Gospel, which up to this time had been preached only in Asia, is now directed westward into Europe, and the Apostle to the Gentiles is to be the bearer of the "Good News."

Paul's response to the expressed will of the Lord was immediate, and passage was secured on the first boat that would bear them to the shores of Greece. Crossing the eastern arm of the Xgean

Sea, they landed at Neapolis, going from there overland to Philippi, which at that time was an important Roman Colony.

### **AT PHILIPPI**

Doubtless the Apostle would recall with some satisfaction the fact that they had found no Jewish synagogue at Philippi and so would experience no trouble from that quarter, but they had been faced with the problem of where to hold a meeting.

In almost every other city where he had preached the Gospel, it was done first in the Jewish synagogue, and thus the Jews were first to hear the message of salvation. This had not been the case, however, in Philippi, where their search for the meeting place led Paul and his companions to a place by the river bank where "prayer was wont to be made." Here a certain woman who worshiped God, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, heard Paul. The Lord opened her heart and she attended unto the things which were spoken by the Apostle, and acquired the distinction of becoming the first European convert, bringing her entire household with her.

The genuineness of Lydia's conversion was immediately apparent in the kind hospitality extended to the Apostle and his companions, for she constrained them to come and abide at her house. This, no doubt, would be one of the pleasant memories that came to Paul as he wrote this edifying epistle.

Memories of Philippi were not all pleasant, however, for the Apostle's labors there had been cut short by an occurrence involving a slave girl who, under the influence of evil spirits, had harassed the Apostle and those with him, as they traversed the streets of the city to and from the place of meeting. A very interesting point in this episode lies in the fact that the evil spirit controlling the girl enabled her to properly identify Paul and those with him as the servants of the most high God, and their message as the way of salvation. At the Apostle's command the spirit left the girl, and with it the ability to enrich her owners through her witchcraft. These individuals, incensed at the consequent loss of revenue, incited the people to violence, touching off a chain of events which made the next twenty-four hours long to be remembered by the Apostle and those with him; for there followed in rapid succession arrest, flogging, imprisonment, an earthquake, release from prison, conversion of the jailor and his house, a midnight meal, triumph over the embarrassed Roman officials, a meeting with the brethren, then the departure for Thessalonica.

It is noteworthy that a prison experience is associated with the formation of the ecclesia at Philippi, and that ten years later finds Paul writing to them from a prison in Rome.

### **A LOVE LETTER**

No other epistle of Paul's expresses such tenderness and love as is found in this letter to the Philippians, where we find such expressions as, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"; "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all"; "Dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown"; "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you." In regard to some of the other churches, he was under the necessity of using the language of reproof -for instance, to the Galatians in regard to doctrinal error, to the Corinthians about strifes and divisions and moral irregularity. In Philippi, however, there was scarcely anything that called for rebuke: on the contrary, there was much that called for commendation and gratitude. Their conduct toward the Apostle had always been noble and generous, having always shown the tenderest regard for him in his troubles, providing for his needs on every possible occasion. His response as shown in

this letter is that of a tender and affectionate pastor to a much beloved flock, indicating as it does the spirit of a ripe Christian, one who was near the end of his course.

## **REJOICING IN PRAYER**

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:3, 4, *Authorized Version*).

What was it that gave the Apostle this joy in remembering his Philippian brethren at the throne of heavenly grace? The context indicates that it was the manifestation of their generosity and loyal support, not because of the personal benefits that were his as a consequence, but rather that it was proof to him of their love and sincerity as Christians; their willingness to participate in the sacrifices entailed in proclaiming the Gospel.

The thought of their constancy was to him an assurance that God was still working among them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure," that he would thus complete the work begun years before under the leadership of the Apostle himself. This knowledge not only gave him personal strength, but filled his heart with gratitude as he remembered them before the throne of heavenly grace, making supplication for them with joy. "For God is my witness how I long after you all with the tender sympathies of Christ Jesus"- (Phil. 1:8, *Diaglott*).

Let us now consider the prayer that the Apostle offered with such joy: "And this I pray, that your love may yet abound more and more in knowledge, and in all perception, in order that you may examine the differences of things; and that you may be sincere and inoffensive in the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:9, 10, *Diaglott*).

Weymouth gives a very interesting translation of the tenth verse as follows: "For testing things that differ, so that you may be men of transparent character, and may be blameless, in preparation for the day of Christ."

"Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11, *Diaglott*).

It is worthy of note that in the ninth verse the Apostle ties in love (abounding love) as most necessary in the development of knowledge and perception, in order that they might carry on the work suggested in the tenth verse. The Apostle in 1 Corinthians 8:1 writes that "knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up."

Therefore, knowledge and keenness of intellect, perception, used in the testing of differences, in weighing differences of opinion, etc., apart from, or without love, even abounding love, will not bring forth that which will be pleasing to God, or edifying to the Body of Christ. How often it has been the case amongst the Lord's people that those with the most brilliant minds experience the greatest difficulty in working together harmoniously, due obviously to failure to work along the lines suggested in the Apostle's prayer, to let love abound in the acquisition and use of knowledge.

The Apostle also prays that they might be sincere in their efforts, and no doubt this would be true if love were permitted to overflow or abound in the measure which God would supply, and thus there would be purity of motive, no working at cross purposes, no self-promotion in their cooperation one with the other.

The word "sincere" means, literally, without wax, or pure and transparent, as honey. Applied to Christian character, it would mean that which is not deceitful, ambiguous, or hypocritical, that which does not proceed from selfish and interested motives, and where there is nothing disguised.



He also prays that they might be "inoffensive" in the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness -- that which righteousness in the heart produces, fruit that will be seen in the life, such as honesty, truth, love, kindness, meekness, and goodness. He prays that they might show abundantly by their lives that they truly were lovers of righteousness. With qualities such as these holding sway in their lives, giving offense to any one would be a remote possibility during their schooling in Christ.

Realizing the spiritual heights to which it was possible for them to attain, and aware of their good beginning, the Apostle found it a deep source of joy to remember them in the presence of the One who had begun the good work in them and would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

*(To be continued)*

*- J. B. Webster*

## Resurrection

Dear Lord, I pray for courage, strength, and love,  
For that pure wisdom, promised from above,  
That I may faithful be and worthy found  
To stand "that day" beside the grass-grown mound  
Of my beloved dead, and say,  
"Arise! Come forth to light and life, lift up thine eyes!  
Awake, and burst the prison bands of death!  
Stand up, the God of Heaven restores thy breath!  
Return unto the land that gave thee birth --  
No longer, as of old, a sin-cursed earth --  
The desert places blossom as the rose,  
With fragrance laden, every breeze that blows!

A Highway thou shalt find, a way of life,  
No pride, nor selfishness, no envy, strife,  
Shall prosper there; the ransomed of the Lord  
Shall walk thereon, obedient to His Word;  
No longer shall the '*lion*' or '*ravenous beast*'  
Upon the poor, the weak, the innocent feast;  
There God shall wipe all tears from every eye,  
No grief shall touch thine heart, not e'en a sigh,  
And there shall be no death, nor any pain! Awake!  
Rejoice and join the glad refrain,  
*Hosanna, peace on earth, good will toward men,*  
*All honor to the Lamb. Amen! Amen!"*

- Gertrude W. Siebert.

## The Question Box

### Luke 16: 1-13

Last month in our discussion of the Parable of the Unjust Steward, we summarized our understanding of its lesson as follows:

"In this parable our Lord is teaching his disciples the proper, that is to say, the Christian, use of earthly goods."

That discussion was not intended to be exhaustive (indeed, it did not go beyond verse 8), but was directed chiefly to an examination of the quality for which the lord in the parable commended the unjust steward, and for which *our* Lord seemed to be (and for which, indeed, within limitations, he actually was) commending him. We did -not mean, or say, that the parable could not be properly interpreted otherwise; we did, however, point out what to us seems to be *the* lesson of the parable: -- *the Christian use of earthly goods*.

The steward was not commended by his master (nor by *our* Master) for being unfaithful or unjust, but "because he had done wisely (or prudently)."

It was possible for such commendation to be made, for the same reason that it is possible for us to speak approvingly of the *strength* of a wrestler, the *skill* of a baseball pitcher, the *sleight of hand* of a conjuror, the *voice* of a singer, the *ability* of a surgeon, the *genius* of an inventor, etc., without any one supposing us to be expressing our judgment as to their *moral worth*. We might quote an eminent skeptic as a very good model of *patience*, while at the same time deploring his *skepticism* (just as the lord, in the parable, commended the *prudence* of his steward while *in the same sentence* declaring him to be *unjust*). And *if we may* detach noble qualities from the base, with which they are blended, and offer the suggestion: "Imitate these men in what is noble, pure and lovely," without being supposed to add: "and imitate them also in what is mean, weak and immoral," may not our Lord, in his parables, do the same?

That is precisely what the steward's lord, in the parable, and *our* Lord in his interpretation of it, does here. The one quality of *prudence* (not *wisdom*, which in Scripture is always associated with *goodness*, but *prudence*) is singled out for commendation by the lord of the steward, and urged upon his disciples by *our* Lord. "The lord commended the unjust steward . . . and I say unto you...." - Luke 16:8, 9.

### A Related Question:

In Luke 16:9, instead of the words given in the Authorized Version, "when ye fail," some translations read: "when it fails." Has this difference any significance and, further, which translation is correct?

*Answer:*

There is good manuscript authority for either translation. Moreover, while on the surface they may appear to be mutually exclusive, they need not be so understood. In this connection it is interesting to compare the two given in the *Diaglott*. There the word for word translation reads: "when you may fail," while in the right-hand column, the emphatic version reads: "when it fails." Other translations supporting the emphatic version include:

*Rotherham*, "as soon as it shall fail." *Revised*, "when it shall fail." *Fenton*, "when it departs." *Trench*, "when it fails."

No matter which translation is preferred, most scholars understand the passage to apply at the time of death. *Moffatt*, indeed, translates: "when ye die." It was from this viewpoint than our remarks last month were submitted.

Most of us, no doubt, understand that the good we do with our "goods" will receive an appropriate reward *after death*. But this understanding does not exhaust the meaning of the passage. For, while it is true that our Lord promises us an "eternal" reward, *on the other side the grave*, the word eternity covers the past and present, as well as the future. And while it is true that when *we* fail (in death) *it* (mammon) will fail (us), is it not also true that mammon may fail us *before* we die? May we not, even while we remain in this life, lose our money, or find that there are other losses for which no money can compensate us? We know very well that we may; some of us know it only too sadly. Riches have wings *for use*; not merely for ornaments. It is not only the grim face of Death that scares them to flight; they flee before a thousand other alarms. And perhaps *the* point of our Lord's words may be this: "*Whenever* mammon fails us, *in life* and its changes and sorrows, *no less than in death*, if we have previously made friends by our wise use of it, these friends will open their tabernacles to us, tabernacles in which our stricken spirits may find refuge and consolation. It is this present, this constant, this eternal reward, of the Christian use of our temporal possessions, on which we need most of all to fix our thoughts.

Not only our Lord, but St. Paul has much to say on this matter. Perhaps his fullest expression is to be found in his first letter to Timothy, chapter 6. There he affirms that godliness with contentment is the true gain; that then only are we rich, when we want nothing and long for nothing we do not possess, when our minds and hearts are settled in a sacred content, undisturbed by lusts and cravings for things beyond our reach.

That wealth should never stand first with us and that it should be valued only for the good uses to which it may be put -these are not only Christian principles to which our attention is drawn by our Lord in Luke 16 and by St. Paul in 1 Timothy 6, but they are principles which commend themselves to every man's reason and conscience in the sight of God. And therefore, we shall be condemned by reason and conscience, as well as by Christ, if gain is more to us than godliness; if we dread poverty more than we dread sin, or sorrow more over a bad debt than over a bad action, over a loss of money than over a loss of temper; or if we do not seek to make a wise and generous use of our money, rather than to secure a selfish enjoyment of it.

Consider: Here is a man, let us suppose, sincerely anxious to take the right course and to make the best use he can of his life. All around him he sees neighbors who are pushing on with the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of fortune, who are sacrificing ease, culture, pleasure, health, and at times conscience itself, in their love for that, the love of which St. Paul pronounces to be a root of all evil, a temptation and a snare, and which our Lord himself says makes it very hard for a man to enter the Kingdom of God. He has to determine whether or not he will join in this headlong pursuit-whether he, too, will risk health of body, culture of mind, and sensitive purity of conscience, in the endeavor to grow rich, or richer than he is. He sees that the dignity and comfort and peace of human life depend largely on his being able to earn a sufficient income to supply a large circle of wants, without being in constant anxiety and care; but he also feels that he has many wants, and these the deepest, which mere wealth cannot supply. Accordingly, he resolves to work diligently and as wisely as he can, in order to secure an adequate provision for his physical necessities, and to guard his independence; to provide things honest and decent in the sight of all men; but he resolves also that he will not sacrifice himself, or all that is best and purest and most

refined in himself, to the pursuit of money and what it will buy. Hence, so far as he can, he limits his wants; he keeps his tastes simple and pure; and by labors that do not absorb his whole time and energies he provides for the due gratification of these tastes and wants. Hence also he gives a good deal of his time and energy to reading good books, let us say, or to mastering some natural science, or to developing a taste for music and acquiring skill in it. He expects his neighbor, who had no better start nor opportunities than he, to grow far richer than he himself has done, if his neighbor think only of getting and investing money. And, therefore, he does not grudge him his greater wealth, nor look on it with envious eye; he rather rejoices that he himself has given up some wealth in order to acquire a higher culture, and to develop his literary or artistic tastes.

Here, then, we have two men, two neighbors before us. The one has grown very rich, has far more money than he can enjoy, more even, perhaps, than he quite knows how to spend or invest, but *he has, hardly anything except what his money will procure for him*. The other has only a modest provision for his wants, but he has a mind stored with the best thoughts of ancient and modern wisdom, an *eye* which finds a thousand miracles of beauty in every scene of Nature, and an ear that trembles under the ecstasy of sweet harmonious sounds. By some sudden turn of fortune, *mammon fails them both*; they are both reduced to poverty; both, so soon as they recover from the shock, have to make a fresh start in life. Which of the two is better off now? *Which of them has made real friends for himself* out of the mammon while he had it? Not the wealthier of the two, certainly; for, now that he has lost his wealth, he has lost all that he had; he has lived only to get rich; when his riches went, all went. But the other man, the man who read and thought and cultivated his mental faculties, *he* has not lost all.

His money has gone, but it has not taken from him the wise thoughts he had gathered from books, or his insight into the secrets and beauties of Nature, or the power to charm from the concord of sweet sounds. He is simply thrown more absolutely on these inward and inseparable possessions for occupation and enjoyment. While he had it, he made friends for himself out of the mammon of unrighteousness; and, now that it has failed him, these friends receive him into tabernacles which are always open, and in which he has long learned to find pleasure and to take rest.

The foregoing illustration may suffice to make our Lord's words clear. And it is one that I do not fail to use when young people seek my vocational counsel and guidance, even though they do not profess to be followers of the Master. But it is not a perfect illustration, for there are losses in which even science and art, even nature and culture, can give us but cold comfort.

It does, however, point to a still better way -- the way of whole-hearted consecration to God. For, obviously, if a man give a good part of the time he might otherwise devote to the acquisition of wealth, to the cultivation of godliness, instead of to merely *intellectual culture*; if he take thought and spend time in acquiring habits of prayer and worship and obedience and trust; in acquainting himself with the will of God and doing it; if he expend money, and time which is worth money to him, in helping to further the glorious Gospel, and in ministering comfort in the ecclesia in which he is a member, and to his other associates in Christ, throughout the country in which he lives, and indeed throughout the world; he, too, has made to himself friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, friends that will not fail him when mammon fails him, but will receive him into tabernacles of rest. However poor he may be, he may still pray, and read the Bible, and put his trust in God, and comfort all that mourn in Zion who may come his way; he may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and of his Son our Lord; and, by his cheerful contentment, and unswerving confidence in the goodness of God, and in the *ultimate* triumph of that goodness over evil (notwithstanding all surface indications to the contrary), he may now bear witness, with an eloquence far beyond that of mere words, to the reality and grandeur of a truly consecrated life. Faith, hope, and love, righteousness and godliness, patience and meekness, *these*

*will* not close their doors against him, because mammon has slammed *his* door in his face. *These* are eternal friends, who pitch their tabernacles beside us wherever our path may lead, and who welcome us to the rest and shelter they afford when the cold north winds of adversity blow upon us, as well as when the south warm winds of prosperity come. - Song of Solomon 4:16.

In short, it is not merely *a future* reward which Christ promises to as many as make a wise use of money and money's worth (although it includes that), but it is *a present*, a constant, an eternal reward. Virtually he says to us: Use your money for wise ends, whether you have little of it or much; make it your servant rather than your master; compel it to minister to your spiritual as well as to your temporal wants; expend thought and time and labor in the effort to become wise and good and kind -- to become, indeed, like the Master himself. And then, *whenever* mammon fails you, your wisdom and goodness and kindness will abide with you; and these will fit you, far more than any wealth, for a noble and happy life, whether in this age or in that which is to come.

- P. L. Read.

## Fellowship With the Father and His Son

### 1 John 1: 3

(Continued from last issue)

*"If a man love Me, replied Jesus, he will obey My Word: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." - John 14:23, R.S.V.*

THE earnest desire and craving for God, for his courts, experienced by those who have given their hearts to him and have been begotten of his spirit, is expressed in many Scriptures. Many of the Psalms beautifully convey the thought 'that his fellowship, his courts, his temple -- intimate fellowship with him -- is the one thing above all others to be desired. As for instance the following:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. . . . The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." - Psa. 27:4; Psa. 42:1, 2, 8; Psa. 63:1, 2; Psa. 84:2.

### A LIFE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

This life of oneness and fellowship with the Lord should be the natural state and abiding experience of every child of God, by reason of the new life begotten in him, as he patiently follows in the footsteps of his Master. "Ye have died and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3.) "Like as he was raised . . . we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4.) The prophetic utterance of the Psalmist regarding our Lord (Psalm 39), may be understood as true also of those who are joined to him in living union. Psa. 39:17-18 declare the soul's delight in God, and its constant meditation upon him, and concludes with the words: "When I awake I am *still with thee.*" So it is with those who have been brought into fellowship with God, and with whom the Father and the Lord Jesus make *their home*. The conscious and subconscious condition of heart and mind, whether waking or sleeping, is resting in God, meditating on him, communing with him-"I am *still with thee.*"

Likewise Jesus said concerning himself-"Just as the living Father hath sent me and I live because of (or for) the Father, even so he who eateth me will live by me." (John 6:57.) The life of Jesus was not lived independent of his Father but because of, by and through union with his Father, and at the same time *for* him. What was true of him is and must be true of his followers -- "Even so." - John 6:56, 58.

Then Paul affirms in Phil. 3:20, 21: "Our citizenship [mode of life] in the heavens subsisteth (has its rise)." There is its source and its means of subsistence; not here on earth, for it is *not of the earth*. And in similar strain the same Apostle in Col. 3:4 states: "When Christ *who is our life* shall appear *then shall ye also appear* with him in glory." So surely as Christ is our life and we live to him and for him, in living union with him faithfully day by day, then just as surely shall we appear *with him when he appears*. What a wondrous hope! What a truly blessed expectation! And

John (1 John 3:1-3) completely confirms this. The question for each one of us must be, as we allow the penetrating light of God's Word to examine and test our hearts: Is Christ *our life*? Does he live in us, and we in oneness, living union with him?

As we find it to be so, then, when by his wondrous grace we meet our Lord (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), and are ushered into the presence of our Father, we shall not feel strange, or estranged, but be *at home* because every longing will then be satisfied. There will be -- "*no thirst, no hunger there!*" The realms of the spirit, the presence of our Father, will be found to be the habitat of that new life which even now is ours because begotten of him. (James 1:18.) If there is any strangeness for the new creature, it is *now* (not then) toward and in this natural, earthly environment.

### **AN UNSATISFIED LONGING**

It is because of this new life, this change which God has wrought, that each one who has come within its power is possessed of a heart-longing for God, not merely and only to see him, which will be an indescribable and matchless joy, but to be *with him* and *with our dear Lord* who gave himself for us. And it surely must be true that the more deeply we drink *now*, the more we experience of this hallowed fellowship and communion, the greater will be this longing. We see how this was so with the beloved Apostle Paul, as he testifies in Phil. 3:10, 11: "If *by any means I* might attain unto the resurrection *out from among the dead.*" How could it be otherwise? The loving heart, wrought by God, yearns simply and unfeignedly for this promised "change." And as the heart is set and fixed upon him, and the spirit of God shines therein and therefrom, it is true that the life becomes more conformed to the life of Jesus and displays his grace and reflects his glory. (2 Cor. 3:18.) These, as they ever contemplate the Father's grace and glory as reflected in Jesus, become more and more unconsciously like him just as Moses was affected by reason of his having been with God in the Mount (Exod. 34:29-35): "And Moses wist not" -- he did not know his face shone! It must be so.

And it is likewise true that these who by the Father's grace have been made sharers in this fellowship, become more conscious of their own unworthiness according to the flesh. (Rom. 7:18.) That was the effect upon Isaiah when he had a vision of God. (Isa. 6:1-5.) The more, the child of God has of this experience, the more Christ-like he becomes, the less he sees himself to be. Yet his love and longing increase; he yearns to be yet nearer, and so to enter into the reality, the perfection, the purity and light of the Divine presence.

### **HOW POSSIBLE?**

Words cannot adequately describe and express the deep and rich blessedness, the sublime peace and joy that results from this life of fellowship and communion with God. Truly, "The love of Jesus, what it is none but his loved ones know." Some may even say that with all the varied distractions of modern life and the temptations therein, the tendencies of inbred sin, etc., it is not possible of attainment, and that the words of our Master are to be understood merely as presenting the ideal state. But such a line of thought robs such promises of all their blessed power and practical meaning, and belies the positive words of John already noted: "*Truly* our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Accepting the thought that this privilege of such close communion, fellowship, and oneness with the Lord is a present privilege, is it possible to secure it by earnest reverential study of the Word? Does it come about by a life of devotion and prayer? Is it the result of earnest and applied effort? None of these things in themselves, nor any good endeavor on our part will bring this blessing.



We have already seen that this new life, essential to this blessing and the fulfillment of the promise of John 14:23, can be brought about only by the exercise of God's sovereign will and his power exercised to bring us forth as new creatures. But something further is shown to be vital, that these might have the joy and blessing of the promise: "My Father will love him and *we will come unto him* and make our *home* [our abode] with him." Jesus said: "I *will manifest myself unto him*." There must be the revelation of the Father and the Son. - Eph. 1:17; Matt. 11:27.

There is also the loving obedience in the keeping of his commandments which we will consider later as being our part. Yet withal, there must first be the bringing forth into this new (spiritual) life by God, and then the revelation of and by the Father and the Son.

### **I WILL MANIFEST MYSELF**

The meaning of the word "manifest" as used by our Lord is to "make apparent." It is rendered "disclose" in Hebrews 9:24, and "declare plainly" in Hebrews 11:14. The essence of the thought in the word is, to cause that to be seen (or known) which would not otherwise be recognizable by the unaided eye or mind. Therefore, unless the Lord has been so pleased to manifest himself, it is not possible for any to receive, see, or know, much less to be so favored as to have the Father and the Son make their abode in the heart and life.

The Scriptures show that God hides as well as reveals himself. It was a punishment for their evil of which God forewarned Israel: "I will surely hide my face." (Deut. 31:17, 18.) In Psalm 13:1, David voices his plea: "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Then in the time of Israel's calamity, occasioned through their sin, Isaiah exclaims: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, Oh God of Israel, the Savior." - Isa. 45:15.

Not only does Jesus promise-"I will manifest [make myself apparent, declare plainly] *myself*", but that only by and through him is the Father revealed to those who are thus to be honored. This is plainly stated by our Lord in Matthew 11:27: "All things are *delivered unto me* of my Father; and no man knoweth [*Rotherham* - "*fully knows*") the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth ["fully knoweth") any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the *Son will* [is pleased to] *reveal him*."

Many know about God, even claim him, and call upon him, as Father. Similarly many know about his Son Jesus Christ and profess to be his disciples but they cannot fully know and have this intimate, personal knowledge of and fellowship with the Lord save by revelation from him. This experience of which Jesus speaks and gives promise, goes beyond knowledge. It is a fellowship, *partnership*, *oneness* and Communion, an *affinity* as of and in the divine family -- "*we will make our home* [abode] *with him*." This, as we have seen, can come only to those who have been made sons of God, (1 John 3: 1) and who are therefore of the spirit, spiritual -- "*not in the flesh*," (Rom. 8:9) and who have the spirit, mind, and the power of God working within.

### **HOW POSSIBLE -- OUR PART**

Being made sons of God, brought by God's power to newness of life as new creatures, there devolves a responsibility upon such, and they have their part to perform. Our Lord makes plain that the blessing of close and abiding communion with the Father and himself and their taking up their abode (making their home) in the heart and life, is for those whose *love* is manifested in obedience and who keep (retain) his words: "He that hath [retains) my words and keepeth them *he it is that loveth me*." As the word is received and retained and joyfully obeyed, therein is proof of a true love. Many receive the words and delight in them, but in the searching tests that disciple-

ship requires, they are found wanting, just as Jesus showed in the parable of the "Sower and the Seed."

Consequently in the next chapter, John 15, Jesus gives illustration of the origin, sustenance, and maintenance of this new life, its fruitage and blessing. At the same time, we read in verse 7: "*If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, [He that hath (retains) my commandments, words] then ye shall ask: what ye will and it shall be done unto you.*" Observing these conditions, the petitions presented will be in accord with his will (words), and therefore there would be no unanswered prayers for such. This blessed condition and life results from and is embraced within the experience promised in John 14:23: a heart and life in tune with, and enjoying a true *affinity* with, the Father and the Son -- *at one, at home, being and living in the spirit.* - Gal. 5:25.

Again in John 6:56, 57 Jesus affirms: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth in me, and I in him.*" Thus the promised blessing: "*We will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" (See also John 14:20.) "Dwelling in me and I in him" is inseparably linked with eating my flesh and drinking my blood, or in other words, a suffering with Jesus and being dead with him -- following in his steps. There must be then, on our part, faithfulness in discipleship-- "denying self, taking up our cross daily and following him," if we would obey his words and truly love him, and thus have the Father and the Son make their home in (dwell with) us.

Let us note in passing that the words of John 6:56, 57, as above, can never and will never be true of the world of mankind. The very solemn truth of these words is most vital if we would now have the conviction that we are in fellowship, partnership, in oneness with the Lord.

### **HOLY CONFIDENCE AND ITS ASSURANCE**

The vital and all-important issue for each one is to have the calm confidence of sonship by begetting of God. This rests, not upon emotion or feelings; it is stranger to doubt and hesitation, because it relies upon the unerring testimony and sure foundation of our Father's Word -- above all, upon his faithfulness. "Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. 5:24.) Not only have we the witness of God's spirit through his Word with our spirit such as the passage we have but briefly examined in 2 Cor. 5:1-5, but the evidence of his providence and dealings. Just as Israel could know they were the people of God through the manner of his dealings with, and revelation of himself to them, so, by this same means, in addition to the Word, the Father has furnished evidence in our lives of his providence, care, leading, preservation, and protection. As the child of God looks back over life's journey, he finds that the only explanation for the circumstances and experiences of the way is that the Father's watchful eye has been over his pathway, directing, ordering, shaping, and that he has by divers means and circumstances taught him and brought him to Jesus. (John 6:45.) "Every one therefore that hath learned of the Father cometh to me," and "no man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) The child of God knows and is persuaded that he has been so dealt with by God, and gives praise to the Father as in serenity and confidence he presses on. By the evidences of his own life, he receives assurance, a conviction of heart and mind. He knows God has begun the work, that "He has inspired the cry," and so he has in addition, the assurance (certainty) of hope. - Heb. 6:11.

The Father does not leave his child to doubt and fear, nor to the uncertainty of some wishful imagination, to feeling and emotion, but he settles the heart of his child by the constraining power of his own love, and the witness of the spirit through the Word and, as we have seen, the evidence of his care and working in the life. And so the child of God can say with humble and very grateful confidence-- "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded." This expression: "I know," occurs

frequently in relation to the life of the new creature, and a study of them will be found most profitable and strengthening to faith. The child of God knows also, only too well, that since his feet commenced to tread the "narrow way that leadeth unto life," the power of God, and that alone, has kept him. - 1 Peter 1:3-5.

### **HAVING THIS CONFIDENCE**

With the witness within ourselves (see Heb. 10:34) that we are sons of God; that we have been brought into oneness with the Father and the Lord Jesus; knowing that "God is faithful" and that as we continue faithful, yielding ourselves up to his Will in all things, then, "He that hath begun a good work in you will finish it," we may have confident hope. While rejoicing in this and in this rest in the Lord, the child of God is aware of Satan's wily endeavors to destroy; of the dangers that lie all around; of his own frailty and weakness, and the need for an "eternal vigilance," and to give heed. He is not boastful, but trustful in the love and power and in the faithfulness of the Father who has called, and of his gracious Lord who, the meanwhile, "ever liveth to make intercession."

Moreover he knows, because of the witness that God by his spirit has borne home to his heart through his Word and providences all through the way, that when "He [the Lord Jesus] shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Such rejoice in the exultant words of John: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.... Beloved, now are we the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; we shall see him as he is." Are we similarly assured? Can we, with John, say, "we know"?

And in these days when the Adversary's onslaughts are on the right hand and the left, from all sides; when the darkness of this world, its fear and distress grow more acute, what peace and quietness is instilled in our hearts as in the opening verse of this same chapter (John 14) Jesus speaks to us and says: "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God; believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go away I will come again and receive you unto myself, so that where I am, ye may be also." When that takes place, then the blessedness of fellowship, communion now enjoyed in the spirit and by faith, will be translated into a personal, glorious reality-"Lost in wonder, love, and praise"! All the signs portend the nearness of that transcendent joy.

Soon the Church's earthly course will be run and the Lord shall appear and we shall be like him, see him as he is. There can be no doubt of the nearness of that glorious event. Let us then, continue steadfast, retaining his words and keeping them, faithfully seeking day by day to do his will. Then, what ineffable joy will be ours, what surpassing grandeur when we "awake with his form," or, as Rotherham translates Psalm 17:15: "I in righteousness shall behold thy face, shall be satisfied when awakened by a vision of thee" or "by thine appearing." Then also the longings will all be satisfied. Meanwhile let us "Abide in him." And if now for a season, there may be heaviness, then when we look back over the way our sentiments will be:

I'll bless the hand that guided,  
I'll bless the heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land.

- G. H. Jennings, Eng.

## Half Hour Meditations on Romans

### No 22

*Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father. -- Matt. 3:9  
If ye were Abrahams children, ye would do the works of Abraham. -- John 8:39*

IN THE first sixteen verses of chapter two of our Epistle we have seen that the Apostle has established the principle of Gods true or impartial judgment. No claim of privilege will be admitted in "the day." While throughout these verses he has had the Jew especially in mind, yet he has expressed himself only in a general and more or less abstract way, and much of what he has said might be understood to apply as well to the Gentile as to the Jew. Now, however, he is ready to address himself directly to the latter, and in verse 17 he designates him by name. "Yet he still proceeds with the utmost caution; for he knows that he is giving a shock to inveterate prejudices, prejudices which he long shared himself."

*"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God" (Rom. 2:17).*

"The general appellation of Jew was given to those of the nation of Israel who returned from the Baby- lonish captivity, because Judah was the principal tribe and those of the people belonging to the other tribes who then came back to the land of their fathers were considered as attaching themselves to it."

### Steps in Self Exaltation

"*Thou art called a Jew.* By this name the person addressed was distinguished as a member of the national community of Israel; a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh; while yet he was only a Jew *outwardly*, and not in the higher and more important sense assigned to the appellation in the conclusion of the chapter; where it includes internal spiritual qualities, of which he who is here addressed was utterly destitute."

"*And retest in the law.*" In reference to their confidence in the law, our Lord himself had said to them: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, *in whom ye trust*" (John 5:45).

"*And makest they boast of God.*" David made his boast *in* God (Psa. 34:2); the Jews boasted of him as *their* God, the God who had chosen their nation to be a peculiar people to himself. "The Jews boasted of this as their exclusive honor; without understanding the great purpose of God in conferring the distinction -- the glory of his own name, and the gradual ripening of his designs of mercy to the world at large. Their glorying was not good: for pride was the source from which it sprang. Instead of cherishing a humble sense of unmerited privilege, they gloried in their privileges, as if they had been rights; or as if to honor and distinguish *them* had been the sole end for which they had been bestowed. The false and foolish confidence, which, in spite of conscious wickedness, the Jews were wont to place in the privilege here particularized is strikingly illustrated by some of the ancient prophets. . . . Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. . . . The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: *yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us.*

*"Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field" (Micah 3:8-12).*

It is instructive to notice the gradation in the self exaltation of the Jew, which the Apostle traces in these three words: Jew, Law, and God. First the Jew recalls the name he bears, doubtless remembering with pride the etymology of that word: *Jehoudah*, the praised one. But the Jew possesses more than a glorious name; he has in his hands a real gift -- the *law*. Here is a manifest sign of the Divine favor on which he may consequently *rest*. From the law his thoughts rise to its great Author, *God*, and the remembrance that the Almighty is his God fills him with *exulting*.

*"And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law" (Rom. 2:18).*

By possessing and studying the law, the Jew next claims that he knows Gods will -- that which men of no other nation know. Moreover, he is thereby able to distinguish between things that differ. He can discern and appreciate the most delicate shades of moral life.

Amid the mistaken judgments of others he has an infallible standard by which he can determine and approve that which is truly good. But while the Jew gloried in the understanding he had, by peculiar revelation of Gods "excellent" will, he failed to accomplish that will in his life. His glorying was in terms of self congratulation, professed approbation of the law, ill supported as the profession was not by any consistency of conduct.

In his knowledge of the Divine will he boasted and was proudly "confident," despising others. This supercilious self sufficiency is expressed in the next two verses.

### **Blind Leaders of the Blind**

*"And are confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (Rom. 2:19, 20).*

Here with a slight touch of ridicule is "set forth the moral treatment to which the Jew, as the born physician of mankind, subjects his patients, the Gentiles to their complete cure. The term *art confident* describes his pretentious assurance. And first he takes the poor Gentile by the hand as one does a *blind man*, offering to *guide* him; then he opens his eyes, dissipating his *darkness* by the *light* of revelation; then he *rears* him as one would bring up a being yet *without reason*; finally when through all this care he has come to the stage of the little child (who cannot speak -- this was the term used by the Jews to designate proselytes) he initiates him into the full knowledge of the truth by becoming his *teacher*."

In these verses the language employed by the Apostle expresses what the Jews thought of themselves rather than what they really did: their boasted capabilities rather than their active endeavors. We are not to suppose that prompted by benevolent compassion and animated by humble and fervent zeal they exerted themselves in conducting blindness, enlightening obscurity, etc. Ah, no! This was their duty; but the duty, as will always be the case when pride has usurped the place of humility, was sadly neglected.

Feeling their own superiority and fond of its display, the sentiment with which they looked upon others was not beneficent compassion but negligent disdain.

It will be noted that in the end of Rom. 2:20 the Jew is said to have in the law the form of

knowledge and truth. But to be acquainted with the law without understanding its proper meaning was in reality to be destitute of the "knowledge" it contained, ignorant of the "truth" concealed under it. The *form* of knowledge and of the truth the Jews possessed in the law was highly valuable; it was the precise *sketch, the exact outline, the correct delineation* of the eternal realities. It contained "a *shadow of good things to come*" (Heb 10:1).

But its value arose from its revealing, although with comparative indistinctness, the reality. Now the Jews with all their boasted pretensions to teach others had yet to teach themselves.

*"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself"* (Rom. 2:21).

In this passage the Jew is not blamed for teaching others but for not practicing what he taught. To teach oneself is to practice what we teach; to teach others and not practice ourselves is hypocrisy. Well did St. Paul realize this: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away" (1 Cor. 9:27). At the same time St. Paul wrote that the Jews were not only ignorant but in *criminal ignorance* of "the truth." "If ye were blind," our Lord had said, "ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41). They had refused, and persisted in refusing, the plainest and most impressive instructions as to the genuine meaning of their law, presented before their minds in the appearance, character, history, and work of Jesus.

"They shut their eyes against the clearest light; and while with vain self sufficiency they said we see, remained in affecting ignorance of what the law contained; and though possessing the form of knowledge and truth, they rested, after all, in error and falsehood. They were the blind people spoken of by the prophet who had eyes, and the deaf who had ears. "

### **Physician Heal Thyself**

*"Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege"* (Rom. 2:21, 22)?

"The specially revealed law on which the Jew relied, which it is his boast to have received from God and in virtue of which he could rightly claim to have a knowledge of Divine things that other men had not, and to be the teacher of nations, the interpreter to other men of the Divine will -- this law finds its first application to those themselves to whom it is given.

How can they preach the commandments, whether it be the eighth or the seventh or the second that is in question, so long as they have so bad a reputation for keeping them? They cannot deny that as of old, so now, their moral conduct causes the heathen to blaspheme their religion instead of being drawn towards it."

The particular moral defects which St. Paul here attributes to the religious Jew are surprisingly grave: theft, adultery, and temple robbery. Yet what he says is not without confirmation from other sources.

"Avarice was a notorious sin of the Jews. Our Lord accuses the scribes of devouring widows' houses under the cloak of religion and denounces the Pharisees also for leaving their outwardly purified cups and platters inwardly full of extortion (Matt. 23:14, 25).

It is only a subtler form of theft that he alludes to when he denounces them for sanctioning the

practice of dedicating property as a *corban* to the purposes of religion in order to evade the righteous claims of parents" (Mark 7:11).

Of adultery they were notoriously guilty. "Even the Talmud accuses some of the most celebrated rabbis of this vice." The prophets denounced it in the strongest terms (see Jer. 7:9; 9:2; Hos. 7:4). "Down to the period of the Captivity, the Prophets could also denounce the people because they were constantly false to Jehovah in matters of worship as well as of morality. After the Captivity, however, the tendency to idolatry is gone forever." But in order to separate the Jews as completely as possible from idolatry, God had commanded them to look upon everything belonging in any way to idols as utterly hateful and disgusting.

They were not to bring into their houses anything pertaining to false gods. "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing" (Deut. 7:25, 26).

Now the man before us professes to share this Divine detestation of idols. Yet he robs temples.

"The language of the town clerk at Ephesus in exculpating St. Paul and his company (Acts 19:37), suggests that temple robbery was a not unfamiliar imputation upon Jews. It appears that with all their horror of idols . . . they could not resist the opportunity of appropriating the rich stores of the temples. The religious scribes and Pharisees (though not of course the best of them) were in fact, as a body, truly hypocrites, as our Lord summarily said they were."

*"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written" (Rom. 2:23, 24).*

Departing from the specification of particular commandments, which while teaching they did not practice, the Apostle here brings against them the comprehensive charge of breaking the law in which they gloried.

## Review

That the force and meaning of the Apostles words may be the better impressed on our minds, let us read them again, using the translation of another, with its helpful interspersed paraphrase: "But if *you*, you emphatically, the reader or hearer now in view, you who perhaps have excused yourself from considering your own case by this last mention [in Rom. 2:14-15] of the responsibility of the non Jewish world; *if you bear the name of Jew*, whether or no you possess the corresponding spiritual reality; and *repose your self upon the law*, as if the possession of that awful revelation of duty was your protection, not your sentence; and *glory in God*, as if he were your private property, the decoration of your national position, whereas the knowledge of him is given you in trust for the world; and *know the Will*, his will, the will supreme; and *put the touchstone to things which differ*, like a casuist skilled in moral problems; *schooled out of the law*, under continuous training . . . by principles and precepts which the law supplies; -- *(if) you are sure that you yourself*, whoever else, *are a leader of blind men, a light of those who are in the dark, an educator of the thoughtless, a teacher of beginners, possessing in the law, the outline, the system, of real knowledge and truth*, (the outline, indeed, but not the power and life related to it); -- if this is your estimate of your position and capacities, I turn it upon yourself. Think and answer.- *-You therefore, your neighbors teacher, do you not teach yourself? You, who proclaim, Thou shalt not steal, do you steal? You, who say, Thou shalt not commit adultery, do you commit*

*it? You who abominate the idols, affecting to loath their very neighborhood, do you plunder temples, entering the polluted precincts readily enough for purposes at least equally polluting? You who glory in the law, as the palladium of your race, do you, by your violation of the law, disgrace your God? For the name of our God is, because of you, railed at among the heathen; as it stands written, in Ezekiel's message (Eze. 36:20) to the ungodly Israel of the ancient Dispersion -- a message true of the Dispersion of the later day (Rom. 2:17 -4)."*

### **A Practical Application**

While we note the lesson in its application to the Jew, let us not fail to take it home to ourselves. What if the Apostle, instead of writing nearly two thousand years ago, were writing today and instead of "Behold thou art called a Jew," were to write: "Behold thou *art called* a Christian; and *retest* in the Bible and makest thy boast of *God* ." The mere name of Christian can, in itself, be of no more avail, with all the privileges it implies, than the name of Jew. Yet to how many even in these days of special enlightenment, might not the question be emphatically put. "Teachest thou not thyself?" Do you not know the purpose for which the God of all grace has given you the volume of inspired truth and has made accessible to you all the valuable helps to its study? It is to show you the way of salvation. It is that you may more and more realize holiness in your life. It is that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in you. If you miss this, you miss its grand design. You receive the grace of God *in vain*.

"And shall not we of the Christian Dispersion take home also what Ezekiel and St. Paul say about the blasphemies, the miserable railing at our God, caused by the sins of those who bear his name?" "If with hearts gladdened by a sense of his love we make our boast in God let us beware of ever giving occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully or to blaspheme his blessed name. For the sake of the glory of God and of the good of mankind let us make steady, incorruptible consistency our unceasing aim. Our admonitions and instructions will be rejected with indignant scorn, or at best will be neutralized and rendered utterly spiritless and inefficient, if they do not come recommended by a corresponding character." "Ah, let us who name the blessed Name . . . amidst the world which understand not a little of what we ought to be, and watches us so keenly and so legitimately, let us take home this message, sent first to the old inconsistent Israel. Do we, professing godliness, show the mind of Christ in our secular intercourse?"

Do we, on the whole, give the average world cause to expect that a Christian, as such, is a man to be trusted in business, in friendship? Is the conviction quietly forced upon them that a Christian's temper and tongue are not as other men's? That the Christian habitually lives high above self seeking? That the Christian tradesman faithfully remembers his customers' just interests and is true in all his dealings? That the Christian employee, and the Christian employer, are alike exceptionally mindful of each other's rights and facile about their own? That the Christian's time and his money are to a remarkable degree applied to the good of others for Christ's sake? This is what the members of the Christian society are expected to be by the world. If they are so, God be thanked. If they are not so, who shall weigh the guilt? Who shall adequately estimate the dishonor so done to the blessed Name? And the Day is coming."

-- P. L. Read



## Recently Deceased

Bro. James W. Barnes, Scotia, N. Y. - (Apr.)  
Bro. E. C. Bigger, Walnut Creek, Cal. - (Apr.)  
Sr. Marie Carroll, Columbus, O. - (Apr.)  
Bro. C. S. Johnson, South Bend, Ind. - (Mar.)  
Sr. H. E. Key, Lowestoft, Suffolk, Eng. - (Feb.)  
Sr. Ada L. Negley, Canton, Ill. - (Apr.)

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## A Word in Season

"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" - Proverbs 15:23.

We are to remember, ... that there are great crises in the lives of men, momentous occasions, in which one word may be more valuable, more potent, than would be a hundred words or a thousand words at another time, under different circumstances; and we are to be instant in the Lord's service, whether seasonable or unseasonable to ourselves, gladly ready to lay down our lives for the brethren. . . . We are to distinguish, however, between out of season to ourselves and out-of-season to others; and to be willing to serve others at any time, however out-of-season to ourselves. - R3124.